

The Night At The Quarry by pookiestheone

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Summary:

Something's wrong with Billy and Max, of all people, is worried.

The Night At The Quarry

As Max dropped her skateboard on the ground and pushed off she could see Billy in the distance, head dropped back against the front seat of the car. It had been months since the fight at the Byers' house; they never talked about that night but things were better between them. He sometimes even acted like the older brother she thought she was getting when her mother married Neil. So much better that she could tell there was something wrong, had been for a while, and for the first time in her life she was worried about him. She just had no idea what to say.

Billy didn't want to go home, but there was really nowhere else. Maybe he'd just drop Max off and then ... Then what? Drive around until it was time to go to bed? Drive out to the quarry and not stop at the edge? His father was more of a prick than ever, regularly dishing out a punch or a backhand if it even seemed like he was starting to get disrespectful or not living up to some impossible standard. The problem was he couldn't tell where the line was, what the rules were supposed to be, anymore. Most times it seemed like he hadn't done or said anything. He was just tired of all the bullshit.

"Billy." Max was knocking on the passenger window. "Unlock the door."

He reached over and pulled up the knob then settled back.

"Am I late?"

"Huh?"

"I'm not late, am I?"

"Nope, don't think so."

"So ... uh, are we going home or are you waiting for someone?"

"Yeah." He started the car.

Max looked at him then took a chance.

“What’s wrong with you recently? Was it what I did at the Byers’ place? It was months ago and besides you ...”

“Nope. We’re fine. I was a dick and if you hadn’t done something I don’t know ...” He put the car in gear and pulled out of the parking lot onto the street. “I just don’t know.” *Maybe I would have killed him. I wanted to, but I don’t know why. I had already taken everything I wanted from him.*

“Jesus, Billy! You ran the stop sign!”

“What? I did not.” He looked in his rear view mirror. “Fuck!” He pulled over and sat gripping the steering wheel.

“Do you want me to walk?” she asked because she couldn’t think of anything else to say.

“No. Don’t be stupid it’s too far. Neil would ... Just give me a sec.”

Max sat quietly as she waited. As much as she didn’t miss the old Billy, the one who was so damn cruel, sometimes this new Billy bothered her almost as much. He was quiet, too quiet, at least at home, and he would disappear for hours at night. She knew he wanted to stay out of Neil’s way, but it wasn’t just that.

“He’s a shithead.”

“Who?”

“Neil. Still don’t know why mom ever married him, but it’s not that. He shouldn’t treat you the way he does.”

“I’m used to it.”

“No, you’re not. And even if you were it wouldn’t make a difference. He just shouldn’t.”

“Yeah, well,” he checked over his shoulder and pulled out onto the road, “I wouldn’t try to tell him that.”

They drove in silence until they were a few blocks from home.

“What are you going to do tonight?” Max asked.

“Not much. Homework. Dinner. Avoid Neil.”

“Not going out with Tommy or anyone?”

“Tommy?” Billy laughed. “Tommy’s dumb as a brick; he has his uses but hang out with him when I’m sober? You’re joking. Maybe I’ll just run up to the quarry.”

“That where you go at nights?”

“It’s quiet. There’s no Neil.”

“Want to come to the arcade later. I mean you can drive me and maybe come in.”

“What? Me with your collection of weir ... friends? After the Byers’? Besides I’m too old for you guys.”

“Steve’s not.”

“You mean Harrington goes to the arcade?” He stored that away just in case.

“Sure.”

“What’s that all about? He’s at the Byers’ with you guys and he goes to the arcade too? Seems ... strange.”

“Steve’s nice. You’d know that if you gave him a chance instead of whatever it is you have against him.”

They pulled into the driveway and stopped.

“You’d have to apologise though. To Steve, but to the guys too. You scared the shit out of them.”

“I’m not good at apologies. Besides they wouldn’t accept it; there’s too much crap between us for that.”

They got out of the car and began walking to the door.

“It’s just an idea, Billy.”

Billy avoided everyone by staying in his room doing homework. They almost got through dinner without incident although Neil was grumbling about ‘kids today, they’ve got some nerve’ for some reason. Max could see Billy tense and stop eating; he ended up leaving half his meal which set Neil off.

“Listen you. I don’t work hard so you can leave food on your plate.”

“No, sir.”

“Have we been giving you too much food then. Is that it?”

“No.”

“No what?” Neil’s hand came up and Billy flinched.

“No, sir.”

“Neil ...” Susan began.

“This is between him and me, Susan.”

“So, you going to clean that plate or not?”

“Yes, sir.” Billy cursed himself as his hand shook while he shovelled the food into his mouth, almost swallowing it whole. Neil stared at him the entire time.

“Now, was that hard?” Neil asked quietly.

“No, sir.”

“Aren’t you forgetting something?”

Billy looked at him, bewildered.

“You have no manners, do you. I blame your mother. Thank Susan for making dinner.”

This was something new. A new rule to add to all the others.

"It's all right, Neil." Susan said.

"No, it's not. Thank her."

"Thank you, Susan."

Suddenly Neil slapped him hard across the side of the face, almost knocking him out of his chair. Both Susan and Max gasped; Susan grabbed Max's hand."

"Think you'll remember next time?"

"Y .. yes, sir"

"Good. Off you go; go do whatever it is you do most nights. Be back by ten thirty."

Billy got up and headed to his room, swearing he wasn't going to cry. He sat down on his bed and buried his head in his hands. *All that and then he just tells me to piss off. I don't get it. All these rules then he suddenly doesn't give a shit. And he tries to blame Mom for something stupid. Fucking bastard.*

There was a quiet tap at his door.

"Billy?"

He sniffed and wiped his eyes.

"Yeah, Max."

She opened the door a crack and looked in. "You want to leave now? Get away from here. I already told mom."

"Good idea."

They managed to get out of the house without any further problem.

As they drove away from the house Billy could sense Max looking at him.

"No, Max. I don't want to talk, OK."

“OK.” In a way she was glad of that because she still had no idea what she could say.

“Sure you won’t come in and wait with me for the guys?” Max asked as she got out of the car at the arcade.

“Yeah. Thanks anyway. You have a ride home, right?”

“Yes.”

“Good. Now close the door and go.”

Billy sat for a moment until she had gone in then pulled away.

Max thought she was early but she quickly spotted Dustin leaning against one of the machines.

“Hey. Anyone else here yet?”

“Just me and Steve. He’s after the attendant because Mario Bros. ate our money again. And there’s Mike and Will now. Hey, guys!”

“I’m going to find Steve. OK?”

“Sure.”

She heard him before she saw him.

“Yeah, c’mon Jerry, that happened last week too. Takes the money then just sits there. Feed it again and it’s fine. Tell Mr. Dawson he should junk it or get it fixed.”

He turned as he pocketed the change.

“Hey, Max.”

“Hi, Steve. You got a minute.”

“Sure. Any time, Red.”

People called her Red at the risk of their lives, but Steve was the one exception.

“Look, this is going to sound weird. I mean with what’s happened between you two. He’s such a dick. Was a dick. The way he treats people. Me.”

“Max. Let me guess. Billy?”

“Oh, yeah. Sorry.”

“And what’s he done now?”

“He hasn’t done anything. It’s not him at all.”

Billy’s stood on the edge of the quarry staring off into the distance. *Just one step.* He raised his foot and let it hover over the emptiness, then quickly put it down and stepped back when he heard a car. At the sound of the door opening he half turned and saw someone get out.

Harrington.

Billy pulled out a cigarette and lit it before turning back, moving closer to the edge again, eyes searching for the other side of the quarry.

“Billy?”

“Yeah, Harrington.” *That god damn Max.* “Leave me alone.”

“S’OK,” Steve hopped up onto the Camaro’s hood, “I just came to enjoy the night. Got a smoke?”

Billy reached into his jacket pocket and tossed the package over his shoulder with surprising accuracy. Steve reached out and snagged it as it passed.

“How about a light?”

He turned and walked over, holding out the flame of his Zippo as he got closer.”

“Thanks.”

Billy grunted as he stuck the lighter into his pocket and went back to the edge of the quarry, but this time he sat down with his feet dangling over the edge.

Steve's legs suddenly prickled with warning.

"Max can't keep her fucking mouth shut."

"She's concerned, that's all."

"How much did she blab."

"Enough."

"So you here to gloat."

"Nope. Thought you might like a bit of company. And as I said it's a nice night."

"Right!" Billy snorted. "Let's cut the crap. Why are you bothering? Not like you should care after all the shit. Not like anyone should care."

"Yeah, you're right, but I care because Max cares, despite the way you've treated her. And yes, I heard about that too. Don't get mad at her though. Until tonight I didn't really know anything about you, at least anything that mattered, and you're still almost as much a stranger as you were the day you showed up at Hawkins High."

"Man of mystery, that's me."

"That what you want?" Steve leant back on his elbows.

Billy shrugged. "I guess."

"Or maybe you could talk to someone."

"You?"

"I'm here."

"Right. So you can see how fucked up I am. Get back at me by telling everyone."

“I wouldn’t do that.”

“I would.”

“Maybe.” Steve sat up and jumped off the car. “I’m going to stay around for a while though.”

“Fine.”

Steve flicked his cigarette into the distance, watching the glow fade as it dropped into the quarry. “Want some music.”

“Bet you listen to crap.”

“What do you like then?”

“Got any Metallica? Megadeath?”

“Nope. Sorry.”

“There’s a tape in the player. The keys are in the ignition.”

Steve winced and lowered the volume when the radio blared on.

“So you into this stuff?”

“Yep. Problem?”

“No. People like what they like.”

“That’s deep.”

“Yeah. Me philosophy man, you mystery man.”

“Good one, Tarzan.”

“Want a drink?”

“What?”

“A drink. Got a flask of bourbon.”

“You carry bourbon around? Sure. Bring it here.”

“No, no. I’m not good with heights,” Steve lied. “I get dizzy ... vertigo.”

“You can’t see the bottom, it’s too dark.”

“There’s moonlight. And it’s still there even if it is dark.”

“All right, goddammit.” Billy pushed himself up and back then got to his feet. Steve sighed in relief.

“This stuff better be good,” he said as he took the flask from Steve’s hand.

“I only steal my dad’s best.”

Billy spluttered and a bit of the bourbon dribbled onto his chin as he handed the flask back.

“Got another cigarette?” Steve asked before he took a drink.

Billy held out the package. “Don’t you buy your own?”

“Nope, usually manage to steal those too.” he smiled and Billy saw him wink.

“Billy grabbed the flask. “That means you owe me another drink.”

They spent the next hour or so smoking and finishing off the flask. Billy didn’t say much and Steve didn’t push him. It didn’t seem so at the time, but it was a turning point for Billy, for them. In the months and years to come, mentioning “the night at the quarry” became the same as saying that everything would turn out all right. Because that’s exactly what happened.

Author’s Note:

“Me Tarzan, you Jane” was never said in any movie, although Weissmuller did use it in an interview, but the joke lives on in many forms. I’m also taking a leap of faith that they both know it.

Seems to me that Steve, at least in S2, feels he needs

to take care of people. I thought that extending it to Billy Hargrove would be interesting.